



WISCONSIN COUNCIL ON INVASIVE SPECIES

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Kearns Recognized as an Invader Crusader

The battle against invasive species in Wisconsin has been fought for many years. One person leading the charge against these unwanted, harmful pests is Kelly Kearns, plant conservation program manager with the Endangered Resources Program of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Kearns has been selected to receive one of the inaugural Invader Crusader Awards presented by the Wisconsin Council on Invasive Species.

The Invader Crusader Award was created to honor Wisconsin citizens and organizations for their significant contribution to the prevention or eradication of invasive species that harm Wisconsin's land and waters.

"It is important that we acknowledge the growing threat from invasive species to our natural resources and work to find solutions," said Governor Jim Doyle. Invader Crusaders, like Kearns, are part of the solution.

Kearns has been deeply involved in all aspects of invasive plant management including public education, development of regulations and bringing together diverse groups to join forces against invasive species. Although invasive species are an integral part of Kearns's current job responsibilities, Kearns's interest, enthusiasm and efforts have far exceeded what is required according to her job description.

Kearns is also a presenter, an organizer, and a co-editor of a widely used manual on "Control Recommendations for Ecologically Invasive Plants," distributed by the DNR. Kearns was a strong advocate for the need to update Wisconsin's noxious weed law and became the 'sparkplug' of the 20-member task force to develop an effective and comprehensive weed program.

A fellow member of the Weed Law Technical Advisory Committee, Dan Wilson, stated, "Kelly is the ultimate champion for action on invasive species in Wisconsin!"

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KEARNS—add one

Finally, Kearns was also a key factor in the creation and continued growth of the Invasive Plants Association of Wisconsin. IPAW originated from a conference in 2001 and has since grown into a statewide organization with a mission protect Wisconsin's natural resources by teaching the public to understand invasive plants and encouraging people to control the spread of invasive plants.

Jerry Doll, University of Wisconsin Extension weed scientist, described Kearns as "...exemplary in her dedication to preserving and protecting our natural resource. This award will recognize her 'above and beyond the call of duty' efforts in this arena and will further energize her to continue in this mission."

Although this was the first year of the award, the response was very positive.

"We received 31 nominations for 22 different people or groups," explained Becky Sapper with The Nature Conservancy and Invasive Species Council member. "There are so many that deserve recognition for their efforts to control invasive species in Wisconsin. We have high hopes that the number of nominations will continue to grow."

Other recipients of the 2005 Invader Crusader Award are:

Betty Czarapata (posthumous award), Muskego

St. Catherine's High School Environmental Club, Racine

Terri Lyon, Kiel

Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission, Odanah

Kristin Westad, Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area, Dodgeville

Invasive species cause harm to ecological resources, causing losses in agriculture, forestry and fisheries.

For more information on the Wisconsin Council on Invasive Species or the Invader Crusader Award, call 715-682-5789.

This news release is sponsored by the Wisconsin Council on Invasive Species. The Wisconsin State Legislature created the Council, to which Governor Doyle appointed 13 members. The Council's mission is to prevent and reduce the harmful impacts of invasive species on Wisconsin's environment and economy, as well as human well-being. Funding for this news release was provided by the Wisconsin Coastal Management Program and the Natural Resource Foundation's C.D. Besadny Conservation Grant Program.